MARVEL

4

LGY#184

LANZING
KELLY
WALKER
HOLLINGSWORTH

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

IT'D BEEN EIGHT DAYS SINCE THE LAST ONE CAME SCREAMING OUT OF THE BLACK.

THE STAR-SHERIFF HAD LET HIMSELF HOPE IN THOSE EIGHT TERRIBLE, QUIET DAYS THAT HE'D PULLED HIS GREAT TRIGGER FOR THE LAST TIME.

THAT HE AND HIS WOULD FINALLY BE LEFT IN PEACE.

NOT THAT HE'D EVER ADMIT IT.

FOR WHEN THE HORNS SOUNDED, ALL OF ***PLANET REFUGE*** KNEW TO LOOK TO THE TRACKS AND THE SKIES. THEY BREATHED EASY AT THE SIGHT OF THE STAR-SHERIFF'S DEFENSES.

A LIFE OF VIGILANCE LIVED IN SERVICE OF OTHERS.

ALWAYS ON CALL. NEVER MISSING HIS MARK.

THE MANY PEOPLES OF REFUGE THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE SACRIFICE HE'D MADE TO PROTECT THEM FROM GROOTFALL.

BUT BETWEEN YOU AND ME?

THEY HAD NO DAMN IDEA.

NO IDEA AT ALL.

THOOM

KHOOM

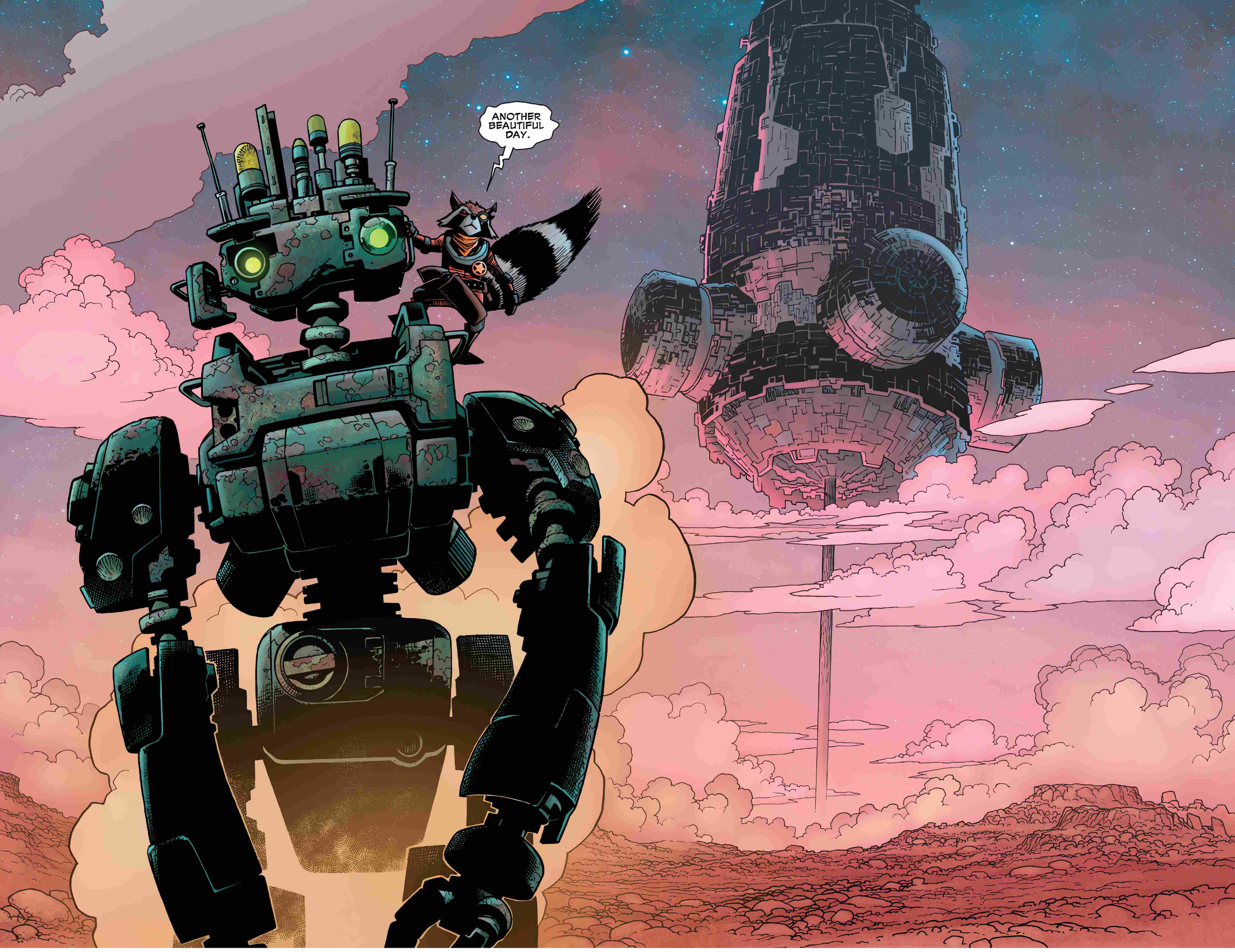
ACTUATORS ARE GETTIN' RUSTY. THAT DROP COULD BE A LOT SMOOTHER.

I-- I--I--I--I AM--

I KNOW, BUDDY. I KNOW. YOU'RE TRYIN' YOUR BEST.

WE BOTH ARE.

AND WHAT DO WE GET FER OUR TROUBLE?


ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL DAY.

PREVIOUSLY...

The Guardians of the Galaxy were the heroes of outer space. But something happened to them one year ago that left them irrevocably changed.

Now what's left of the Guardians roams an area of space called the Manifold Territories, doing their best to save various societies from the terraforming asteroids known as Grootfall.

These balls of flame and thorn consume planets whole, transforming them into strange plant worlds devoid of animal life. Nothing survives a Grootfall. Not even family...

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

IN "THE STAR-SHERIFF"

COLLIN KELLY & JACKSON LANZING
WRITERS

KEV WALKER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORS

VC's TRAVIS LANHAM
LETTERS

MARCO CHECCHETTO
COVER

LEE GARBETT; RICKIE YAGAWA & NOLAN WOODARD
VARIANT COVERS

JAY BOWEN
DESIGN

NOAH SHARMA & KAT GREGOROWICZ
ASSISTANT EDITORS

DARREN SHAN
EDITOR

C.B. CEBULSKI
EDITOR IN CHIEF

RECAP ART BY
KAEL NGU

© 2023 MARVEL. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental.

THE STAR-SHERIFF MADE A PRACTICE OF KNOWING THE PEOPLE UNDER HIS CARE.

THERE WERE TWELVE SEPARATE COLONIES FROM ACROSS THE GROOT-BURNED COSMOS. SOME RUNNING FROM THE 'FALL, OTHERS FROM THE HORRORS OF HOME.

THERE WASN'T MUCH IN COMMON 'TWEEN THE PEOPLES OF REFUGE BUT A SINGLE FACT.

THE STAR-SHERIFF WAS A GOOD MAN.

THEY'D BEEN SAYING IT SO LONG, HE'D EVEN STARTED TO BELIEVE IT HIMSELF.

WHOA, BUDDY.

YOU SEEIN' WHAT I'M SEEIN'?

I AM GR-GR-GROOT...

YEAH. GUESS WORD'S GETTING AROUND ABOUT THIS PLACE.

MIGHT AS WELL GO ROLL OUT THE WELCOME WAGON. BE ON YOUR BEST BEHAVIOR, BUDDY.

I AM-- AM--AM--

BETTER YET, MAYBE JUST KEEP YER MOUTH SHUT.

ATTENTION, NEW ARRIVALS! WELCOME TO *PLANET REFUGE*, THE LAST SAFE PLACE IN THE FOLD.

MY NAME'S *ROCKET*, AND I'M THE SHERIFF 'ROUND THESE PARTS. THIS HERE'S GROOT--

--AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, BUT DON'T LET HIS LOOKS FOOL YOU. HE'S A REAL CHARMER.

NOW, WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE RULES HERE...

RULE NUMBER *ONE*: DON'T MESS WITH THE RAILROADS. OUR DEFENSES RELY ON THEM.

RULE NUMBER TWO: PLAY NICE WITH EVERYONE. FULL STOP.

AND RULE NUMBER *THREE*: IF A BEASTIE GETS PAST THE BIG-ASS GUN, YOU EVACUATE AND NEVER LOOK B--

OH, THAT LAST PART WON'T BE NECESSARY, SHERIFF.

WE ARE HERE *PRECISELY* BECAUSE OF THE *VERY THING* ABOUT WHICH YOU ARE TAKING SUCH TROUBLES TO *WARN* US.

YOU SEE, WE ARE *THE FAITHFUL OF THE ENDLESS BRANCH*...

...AND SOON, WE WILL *ALL BE GROOT.*

...

YEAH. OKAY.

I'M GONNA NEED YOU TO RUN THAT DOWN FOR ME, PREACHER.

LIKE THOSE WHO TRAVEL OUR ROAD, OUR TRUTH IS QUITE SIMPLE.

NATURE IS HEALING.

FROM OUR *HUBRIS.*

FROM OUR *GREED.*

FROM OUR *WARS.*

AND THIS IS ONLY RIGHT. JUST LOOK AT THE GALAXY BEYOND THE MANIFOLD TERRITORIES, FRIEND, AND YOU'LL SEE THE SAME.

A HALF-BREED SITS ON THE THRONE OF THE KREE AND THE SKRULL. VIOLENT MUTANTS CONQUER THE STARWAYS WITH MONEY PULLED FROM THE VERY MIND OF GOD.

BORDERS. BATTLES. ALL FOR THE BLACKNESS OF SPACE.

BUT THE ENDLESS BRANCH IS COMING FOR IT ALL.

AND IT HAS COME TO NO PLACE MORE THAN REFUGE.

THIS IS A SACRED PLACE YOU GOT HERE, SHERIFF.

WE'LL NOT MISS THE SACRAMENT THAT'S ON THE WAY.

THE STAR-SHERIFF MUTTERED SOMETHING ABOUT WISHING THEM GOOD LUCK WITH ALL OF THAT.

THOUGH ALL HE SAW WERE A BUNCH OF FLARKIN' LUNATICS.

SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MINISTER STUCK IN HIS CRAW ALL THE WAY BACK HOME.

A LOOK THAT REMINDED HIM OF A HUNDRED HALF-FORGOTTEN ZEALOTS HE'D FOUGHT IN HIS DAYS BEING A HERO FOR MORE THAN JUST ONE NEEDY WORLD.

THE STAR-SHERIFF HAD NEVER BEEN ONE FOR HAVING FAITH IN ANYTHING OR ANYONE.

EXCEPT ONCE.

HE'D HAD A FRIEND. A GOOD ONE.

BUT THAT WAS A LONG, LONG TIME AGO.

groots I KILLED

WHOOP ALERT! BING BONG

...ALREADY?

DAMMIT. COULDN'T GIVE ME A SINGLE DAY OF PEACE, HUH?

ALERT

ALL RIGHT, BUDDY, WE'VE GOT INCOMING 'FALL IN SECTOR THREE GAMMA.

GET THE TRAIN FIRED UP AND SOUND THE HORNS-- WE'RE GOIN' UP TO DO A MURDER.

REJOICE. PRAISE. BLESSING. BRANCHES AND ROOTS. GROWTH ETERNAL.

REJOICE. PRAISE. BLESSING. BRANCHES AND ROOTS. GROWTH ETERNAL.

REJOICE. PRAISE. BLESSING. BRANCHES AND ROOTS. GROWTH ETERNAL.

REJOICE. PRAISE. BLESSING. BRANCHES AND ROOTS. GROWTH ETERNAL.

FOR OUR TIME HAS COME.

I--I AM GROOOOT?

NO, I *DON'T* THINK THAT THE FREQUENCY OF ATTACKS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH OUR FANTASTIC GUNSLINGING.

I--I--I--IIIIIIIII--

I AM *UNINTERESTED* IN YER NEGATIVITY. JUST LOCK IN AND PRIME THE ENGINES.

"LET'S GET THIS PEA SHOOTER INTO POSITION.

"GONNA BE A LITTLE TIGHT, BUT WE'LL MAKE OUR SHOT VECTOR JUST IN TIME.

"GET OUR FEET PLANTED, BUDDY, THEN GET LOADIN' THE ANTI-COLOSSUS ORDNANCE, OKAY? NO TIME TO--"

KACHUNK

"KACHUNK"?! WHY'S MY BABY GOT A "KACHUNK"?

I AM--AM GROOT!

TRACK OBSTRUCTION?! WE DON'T GET TRACK OBSTRUCTIONS-- *THAT'S RULE NUMBER ONE!*

IF WE CAN'T *KEEP MOVING*, WE CAN'T *MAKE THE SHOT!* AND IF WE CAN'T *MAKE THE SHOT*--

...OH $#%&.

IT WAS THEN THAT THE STAR-SHERIFF KNEW THE TRUTH.

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO...

MAKE US GROW!

A MOMENT OF PERFECT, AWFUL CLARITY.

DADDY... SHOULD WE DO RULE NUMBER THREE?

I...I DON'T KNOW, SON.

I REALLY DON'T KNOW.

IT WAS IN THAT DARKEST OF MOMENTS, WHEN HIS BACK WAS AGAINST THE WALL...

OKAY, YOU STUPID IDIOT, YOU USELESS CREATURE, GROOT'S BACK, AND YOU AIN'T READY, AND NO STUPID BADGE IS GONNA SOLVE THIS--WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO *DO* ABOUT IT, YOU ABSOLUTE PIECE OF--?

...THAT HE FINALLY HAD A CHANCE TO EARN THAT TIN STAR.

HEY, GROOT?

BUDDY.

I GOT A FAVOR TO ASK.

I AM GROOT!

NOW YOU SAY IT RIGHT?!

THE STAR-SHERIFF SWORE TO HIMSELF IN THAT MOMENT THAT HE WOULDN'T LEAVE HIS FRIEND AGAIN.

HE'D DO BETTER THIS TIME. GO OUT IN A BLAZE OF GLORY, BACK-TO-BACK WITH HIS PARTNER.

HE'D BE A GOOD FRIEND.

I AM GROOT.

BUDDY, I AM...SO SORRY...

...BUT YOU'RE REALLY NOT.

THE STAR-SHERIFF WAS GOOD AT MANY THINGS.

GROOT'S NOT COMING BACK.

KLIK

EJECT

BUT NONE MORE SO THAN BREAKING HIS WORD.

...WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?!

THE STAR-SHERIFF HAD NEVER BEEN ONE FOR HAVING FAITH IN ANYTHING OR ANYONE.

EXCEPT ONCE.

I'M...I'M SORRY.

HE'D HAD A FRIEND. A GOOD ONE.

BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

HEYA, ROCKET, THERE'LL BE TIME FOR DYING LATER, BUT GROOT--

GROOT'S GONE.

HE'S NOT.

I TALKED TO HIM. LEAST, I STARTED TO.

AND IF WE WANT TO FINISH THE CONVERSATION, HE NEEDS US ALL THERE.

SO STRAP IN. WE'VE ALL LOST A HELL OF A LOT, BUT IF WE WORK TOGETHER...

"...WE'RE GONNA SAVE WHAT'S LEFT."

NEXT: THE BATTLE OF TORMENT PASS

NEXT: THE BATTLE OF TORMENT PASS

The mystery behind Grootfall is revealed.
How will this forever change the course of the Guardians? Find out here.

PLUS: A bonus page written by Jonathan Hickman--WHO ARE THE G.O.D.S.?

EMAIL US AT **MHEROES@MARVEL.COM** AND MARK **"OKAY TO PRINT"**!